

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 TRSE-00

AID-05 EPG-02 INT-05 OES-07 FEAE-00 /088 W

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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7423

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, CE

SUBJ: PRIME MINISTER KICKS OFF CAMPAIGN IN KANDY

REF: COLOMBO 1916

1. SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER BANDARANAIKE TOOK HER BLUE-CLAD LEGIONS TO KANDY JUNE 3 TO KICK OFF HER PARTY'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN WITH A RELIGIOUS SERVICE AT SRI LANKA'S PREMIER BUDDHIST SHRINE AND WITH A PUBLIC RALLY NEARBY. HER SPEECH DEFENDED HER COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRACY, ATTACKED UNP "THUGGERY" AND IMPLICITLY ADMITTED THAT HER SLFP IS VIEWED BY MANY AS THE UNDER-DOG OF THE ELECTION. SHE ACCUSED THE LEFTISTS AND THE UNP OF BEING BEHIND THE CURRENT RAIL STRIKE AND OTHER LABOR UNREST. A HASTILY WRITTEN DRAFT ELECTION MANIFESTO WAS ISSUED AT THE RALLY BUT IS NOT YET AVAILABLE IN FINAL FORM. END SUMMARY.

2. THE RULING SRI LANKA FREEDOM PARTY (SLFP) LAUNCHED ITS ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN THE HILL CAPITAL OF KANDY JUNE 3 WITH RELIGIOUS SERVICES AT THE BUDDHIST TEMPLE OF THE TOOTH RELIC AND AT MUSLIM, HINDU, AND CHRISTIAN SHRINES FOR PARTY SUPPORT-

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ERS OF THOSE FAITHS. THE SERVICES WERE FOLLOWED BY A PUBLIC RALLY ADDRESSED BY PRIME MINISTER SIRIMAVO BANDARANAIKE, MINISTERS MAITHRIPALA SENANAYAKE, HECTOR KOBBEKADUWA, T. B. ILANGARATNE AND FORMER UNP CANDIDATE J.R.P. SURIYAPPERUMA. A SIMILAR PATTERN OF WORSHIP SERVICES AND A PUBLIC MEETING HAD BEEN FOLLOWED BY THE UNP IN THEIR KICK-OFF MAY 25, ALSO IN KANDY.

3. FROM PRESS COVERAGE, IT SEEMS THAT THE PM WAS ON THE DEFENSIVE FOR MUCH OF HER SPEECH. SHE DENIED THAT SHE WAS CALLING THE ELECTION BECAUSE OF UNP AGITATION ("I FIRMLY BELIEVE IN DEMOCRACY ... I AM NOT ONE WHO IS SCARED OF (UNP LEADER) J. R. (JAYEWARDENE)."). THEN SHE DENIED UNP CHARGES THAT HER GOVERNMENT HAS MISUSED EMERGENCY POWERS. SHE BLAMED THE OIL CRISIS AND WORLD INFLATION FOR THE FACT THAT HER PROGRAMS HAD NOT SOLVED THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. IMPLICITLY ADMITTING THAT THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE JUMPING OFF THE SLFP BANDWAGON AND COVERING THEMSELVES IN ANTICIPATION OF A UNP VICTORY, SHE IS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT "EVEN PEOPLE WHO OBTAINED JOBS THROUGH THIS GOVERNMENT ARE GOING BEHIND THE UNP TO PROTECT THEIR POSITIONS" IN THE "MISTAKEN BELIEF" THAT THE SLFP WOULD LOSE. (THIS SEEMED TO BE A SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO NUWARA ELIYA SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE WHO FELL INTO THE PM'S BAD GRACES LAST WEEK BY ANTAGONIZING HER SON, A CANDIDATE IN THE NUWARA ELIYA CONSTITUENCY. HIS SUBSEQUENT TRANSFER TO FAR-OFF VAVUNIYA WAS CANCELLED AFTER A PROTEST BY POLICEMEN.)

4. CALLING FOR A PEACEFUL POLL, SHE ACCUSED THE UNP OF ATTEMPTING TO COME TO POWER THROUGH THUGGERY. (THERE HAD BEEN A BRAWL SHORTLY BEFORE THE RALLY, INSTIGATED BY THE UNP, BUT ALLEGEDLY IN RETALIATION FOR AN ATTACK THE PREVIOUS DAY ON A UNP OFFICE.) THE PM ADDED OMINOUSLY THAT THE SLFP WOULD BE ABLE TO MEET THE CHALLENGE OF THUGGERY, IF NECESSARY. SHE ALSO ACCUSED THE UNP OF MISUSING THE SACRED TEMPLE OF THE TOOTH, AT WHICH SHE HAD JUST WORSHIPPED, FOR PARTISAN PURPOSES. THE TEMPLE TRUSTEE IS A UNP CANDIDATE THIS YEAR AND HAD ALLEGEDLY ALLOWED THE UNP LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LEADERS SPECIAL PRIVILEGES WHEN THEY WORSHIPPED THERE BEFORE THEIR RALLY THE PREVIOUS WEEK.

5. IN A REFERENCE TO THE CONTINUING RAIL STRIKE (REFTEL), THE PM ACCUSED THE UNP AND THE LEFTISTS OF BEING BEHIND THAT AND OTHER LABOR UNREST IN AN ATTEMPT TO EMBARRASS THE GOVERNMENT. SHE ALSO CASTIGATED THE WORKERS FOR MISUSING TRADE UNION RIGHTS FOR "ABSURD DEMANDS" AND REITERATED THAT HER CARETAKER GOVERNMENT COULD NOT UNDERTAKE SUBSTANTIAL NEW FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS.

6. IT WAS APPARENTLY THOUGHT NECESSARY TO HAVE AN ELECTION MANIFESTO PREPARED IN TIME FOR THE INAUGURAL SLFP RALLY. ACCORDINGLY A HASTILY-DRAWN UP DRAFT WAS RELEASED TO THE PRESS, PROMISING A MINIMUM WAGE, EMPLOYMENT FOR ALL, A MINISTRY FOR YOUTH AFFAIRS, A FARMERS' PROVIDENT FUND, ETC. THE FINAL DRAFT OF THE MANIFESTO HAS, HOWEVER, NOT YET BEEN ISSUED. PERKINS

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Message Attributes

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Sent Date: 06-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Disposition History: n/a
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TAGS: PINT, CE, (BANDARANAIKE, SIRIMAVO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
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